

SONDERDRUCK AUS:

Mission und Gewalt

Der Umgang christlicher Missionen mit Gewalt
und die Ausbreitung des Christentums
in Afrika und Asien
in der Zeit von 1792 bis 1918/19

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KARL GRAUL'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE EVANGELIC LUTHERAN MISSION IN TAMIL NADU, 1844 - 1864

I. Introduction

1. Germans in Tamil Nadu: It was from the times of the first German in India named Heinrich Roth (1620-1668) in the year 1652, that German Indology commenced. But significant German interest for Indology came to be realized only from 1706, with the coming of the first German Lutheran missionary Ziegenbalg to Tamil Nadu. In the year 1612, a trading association was founded in Copenhagen. The Danish East India Trading Company, as it came to be called, acquired a small territory Tranquebar in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu for an annual rent of Rs. 3111 under a grant from the Nayaka King named Ragunatha Nayagar. A Royal Decree dated 19 Nov. 1620 enabled this Danish company to hoist the Danish Flag over Tranquebar.¹ The Danish King Frederick IV, (1699 - 1730) who ascended the throne in 1699 had high ambitions to spread the Gospel among those in a few Danish colonies and especially in Tranquebar in the east Indies. But it is a pity to note that this King, who opened the road to Evangelical Missionary activity² as far as the East Indies, could not enlist even a single Dane for being sent to the far off Tranquebar. The Danes were not ready to fulfil their King's wish ; but " luxury-loving, drinking, lazy adulterous and would be unfit for such religious commitments."³ The Danes expressed their grievance thus:

"Indessen sieht man hieraus, dass es in Europa noch wohl so viel gibt im Christenthume zu begiessen, dass man, ehe solches geschehen, sich nicht in andere Theile der Welt zu pflanzen, zu begeben hätte."⁴

But the Danish King Frederick IV would not give up his hope of spreading the Gospel and looked for help. At this point, Germany came to the rescue of this King. Prof. August Hermann Francke (1663 -1727), a devout Lutheran Pastor in Halle, who had trained young German theologians, decided to help this Danish King. These enterprising young German missionaries were sent from Germany to Copenhagen, where they underwent certain religious tests, commissioned as missionaries and sent to Tranquebar in Tamil Nadu, all through the expenses of the Danish Crown. Hence these missionaries, though Germans by birth, came to be called as "Royal Danish Missionaries". Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) and Heinrich Pluetschau were the first German Lutheran missionaries to be sent by the

1 Walter Leifer, India and the Germans, Bombay, 1971, p. 37.

2 J.F. Fenger, Geschichte der Trankabarschen Mission, (Tr. into German by Emil Francke), Grimma, 1845, p. 12.

3 Arno Lehmann, Es begann in Tranquebar, Berlin, 1956, p. 7.

4 Fenger, p. 269.

Danish Crown and they arrived in Tamil Nadu in 1706 July. From then on, hundreds of German missionaries were sent to Tranquebar and other parts of Tamil Nadu for the spread of the Gospel. Though these Germans were ordered by the Danish Crown to mind 'nothing besides the holy doctrine'⁵ in Tamil Nadu, one will come to know that almost all the German missionaries were drawn deep into the realm of Tamil language, literature, medicine and culture and their unresistive curiosity impelled them to set aside their missionary zeal and to know more and more about the native Tamil people. And at one stage, the Lutheran stalwarts in Denmark and Germany were very much disgusted to find that there had been no considerable increase in the number of Tamil converts in the missionary reports sent from Tamil Nadu; but instead, more nascent, curious and praising informations about tropical herbology, Siddha medicine, customs and manners, feasts and festivals, legends and fables, fastings and rituals of the native Tamil people were reported. Thus there had been a kind of 'spiritual paralysis' and in course of time, the Danish-Halle mission stations waned. At this juncture, the Leipzig Evangelic Lutheran Mission in Leipzig entrusted the work of revitalizing the weak mission stations in Tamil Nadu, to its first Director, Karl Graul (1814 - 1864). Thus Karl Graul happened to come to Tamil Nadu. The pains and efforts he took to revitalize the weak Lutheran mission stations may be known from the following lines.

2. Short biography: Karl Graul was born on 6.2.1814 at Wörlitz. He studied theology and became a private tutor in Italy; later he worked as a teacher in Dessau. From 1844 to 1860 he was director of the Leipzig Mission Society. He toured many Indian cities, starting from Bombay, he visited Madras, Tranquebar, Sirkali, Cuddalore, Tanjore, Trichy besides Ceylon also. His tour of India for nearly four years resulted in his celebrated travel accounts, all of which were published in Leipzig, where he died on 10.11.1864, aged 51 years.

3. Graul's academic efforts: i) During the period 1854-1865, Graul published in four volumes, his *Bibliotheca Tamulica*. The first volume contains the German translation of the vedantha teachings called *Kaivalya Navaneetham* of Tandavamoorthy Swamigal, *Pancadasa Prakarana* of Vittiyanarayna Swamigal and *Atma-bodha Prakasika*. The second volume contains the English translation of *Kaivalya Navaneetham* with a short Tamil grammar. The third and the fourth volumes contain the German translation of *Thirukkural* of Thiruvalluvar.

ii) In 1853, Graul published his travel accounts as a five volumes book titled *Reise nach Ostindien (Journey for the East Indies through Palastine, Sinai and Egypt)* with a total of LXXXI+1635 pages.

iii) "Notices, Correspondences and Miscellaneous items: The Tamil library of the evangelical lutheran establishment in Leipzig": An article of Graul, published in 1853, in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, pp. 558 -

568. In this, one gets the list of all the 150 Tamil books, which Graul took with him to Germany.

iv) "Refutation of the Buddhist system from the standpoint of the Saivism": An article written by Graul and published in the *Journal of the German Oriental Society*, Vol. VIII, pp. 720 - 738, Leipzig, 1854.

v) German translation of Nampi's Akapporul Vilakkam: An article written by Graul and published in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. XI, 1857.

vi) *Indian symbolic plants and flowers, characteristic of Indian and especially of Tamil spirit*. A 226 pages book, authored by Graul and published in Erlangen in 1865.

vii) *An Outline of Tamil Grammar*: Graul authored this due to the "urgent advice of his countryman", the renowned German Sanscritologist Prof. F. Max Mueller.⁶ This one, in English language, was printed as a 100 p. book in Leipzig in 1855.

viii) *The Kural of Thiruvalluvar, a sententious poem of the three striving goals of mankind*. Graul's German translation of *Thirukkural*, published as a XXII+196 p. book in Leipzig in 1865 posthumously.

4. Purpose of his visit to Tamil Nadu: About the purpose of his visit to Tamil Nadu, Graul says thus:

"Der Hauptzweck der Reise war Besichtigung der alten dänisch-halleschen Missionsposten zu Trankebar u.s.w. im Tamulenlande, welche die dänische Regierung seit mehreren Jahren der evangelisch- lutherischen Mission zu Leipzig übertragen hat, die Erforschung der dortigen Verhältnisse in Bezug auf den Missionszweck, und das Studium der tamulischen Sprache und Literatur in ihren beiden Mundarten - überhaupt die Sammlung von Beobachtungen, Erfahrungen und Kenntnissen zur Förderung der Mission unter den Tamulen, so wie der Mission überhaupt. So ist denn die christliche Mission der eigentliche Schwerpunkt und das Tamulenland der eigentliche Brennpunkt der Reise." (The main purpose of the journey was to inspect the mission stations of the old Danish-Halle mission which the Danish Government since some years transferred to the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Leipzig. Also, it was the purpose to learn Tamil with its two dialects and to gather native literatures, observations etc. and to investigate and find out methods for revitalizing the mission activities. So, the main point of this journey is the Christian mission and the focus point is the mission in Tamil Nadu).⁷

Again, in his article Graul wrote the purpose of his visit to Tranquebar in particular, as follows:

"Unterzeichneter ist so eben aus Ostindien von einer ziemlich vier- jährigen Reise zurück-gekehrt, deren Hauptzweck es war, die alten dänisch-halleschen Missionen auf der Coroman-

6 Charles Graul, *An Outline of Tamil Grammar*, Leipzig, 1855, preface.

7 K. Graul, *Reise nach Ostindien über Palästina und Egypten von Juli 1849 bis April 1853*, Erster Theil, Leipzig, 1854, p. VII.

del-Küste, die seit etwa fünf Jahren der Leipziger Missions-Gesellschaft von der dänischen Regierung übertragen werden, zu besichtigen, die dortigen Verhältnisse in Bezug auf den Missionszweck zu erforschen und sich der tamulischen Sprache und Literatur in ihren beiden Dialecten möglichst zu bemächtigen, um so die hinausgehenden Missionare schon hier darin orientiren zu können". (The under-signed has just returned from a four years journey to the East Indies. The main purpose of this journey was to inspect the old Danish-Halle missions on the Coromandel Coast, which are since five years transferred from the Danish government to the Leipzig Mission Society, to inspect and to find out the there-prevailing conditions of the missions and to master the Tamul language and literature in its two dialects, so as to impart a kind of orientation to the missionaries going out from here.)⁸

II. Subject matter

1. Graul's Tamil learning: Even from the very early stage, Graul contemplated on perfect Tamil learning and not superficially. The famous scientist Edison once said, "genius is inspiration 10% and perspiration 90%".

But in the case of Graul the ratio was 1% and 99%.⁹ Graul learnt Italian, French, English, Swedish, Persian and Sanscrit, besides Tamil. He toured most part of India for nearly 30 months and Graul called this period his "scientific high school."¹⁰ He seemed to have learnt Tamil even before his departure to the East Indies; but who taught him in Germany Tamil, could not exactly be ascertained. Lehmann, in his article wonders whether Graul learnt Tamil in Leipzig and adds Carl Immel's saying that Graul knew Tamil before his departure¹¹ to India. It was German missionary Rhenius, who evolved the best method to learn Tamil with its two dialects and copious grammar. Graul followed this *modus operandi*. Select the best teacher, who should know only Tamil and then one would be forced to know the best Tamil sooner, was this formula. About his Tamil teacher and his very hard learning schedule, Graul himself says thus: "Die Zeit von 6 Uhr Morgens bis gegen ein Uhr Nachmittags weihte ich meist dem Tamulischen. Mein Lehrer war der Katechet Nallatambi." (The time from 6 in the morning till about 1 in the afternoon, I devote mostly for Tamil. My teacher was the catechist Nallathambi.)¹²

Daily seven hours' language study may be considered as no mean effort. This should be what Arno Lehmann referred to when he said that in the case of Graul, "perspiration was 99%".

8 Director K. Graul, Notizen, Correspondenzen und Vermischtes. Die tamulische Bibliothek der evang. luth. Missionsanstalt zu Leipzig, in: Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Leipzig, H. 7, 1853, p. 558.

9 Arno Lehmann, Ein deutscher Dravidologe des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther Universität, Jg. XIII Heft 9/10, Halle 1964, p. 606.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., p. 607.

12 Ibid.

in Tamil extempore, is doubly difficult, for, the Tamil poesy demands strict measurements of rules of classical composition, but the European poesy remains far behind it.)¹⁴

These are just a few examples to show that Graul took immense pains to master the Tamil language.

3. Graul's collection of native literature: Graul made use of this opportunity to gain a deep knowledge of the Tamil language for himself, while investigating the reasons for the decay of the mission and to draw out measures to revitalize it with later missionaries from Germany. Graul's bibliomania was so deep that he collected and took away with him to Germany, as many as 150 ancient Tamil literature "in order to provide a basis for further Tamil studies for himself and also for any outgoing theologians whom he desired to be well versed with Tamil literature and the deep Tamil mind."¹⁵ This Graul's "small yet remarkable library"¹⁶ still exists in the Leipzig mission. It has grammatical, lexical, epical, lyrical, dramatical, theological, moral, and philosophical Tamil literatures and also on jurisprudence, medicine, folklore, Varia and 16 pieces of Christian literature in Tamil. Some of these exist only in the form of palmleaves and unpublished manuscripts. I fear that most of these ancient native Tamil literature may not be found anywhere in India. The catalogue of this Graul's collection had been, once long back, in 1853 published in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Journal of the German Oriental Society) written by Graul in German language, which after 137 years, may be very difficult for Indian scholars to obtain. Graul must have made an extensive search for gathering these Tamil literature on many subjects. In terms of quantity, this Graul's library is a small one having only 150 Tamil literature; but in terms of its quality, it must certainly be a very rich one in as much as its original source materials are concerned. That was why Arno Lehmann called this "the small yet remarkable library". Graul first of all was convinced that the Germans who came to Tamil Nadu, should be well-versed in the Tamil language and must be able to speak Tamil, like native Tamil scholars. For that, he himself acquired the best Tamil knowledge.

4. Graul and the "THÂÂLI": Graul also took deep interest in the native customs and manners and the lifestyle of the native Tamils. There are dozens of instances to prove this statement. Suffice it will be to witness a rather subtle and minute aspect of the wedding ceremony of the Tamil people, as keenly observed by Graul. This is one example to show or rather to prove that Graul involved himself very deeply in the local customs and ceremonies of the native Tamils. The Tamil word "THÂÂLI" is a ceremonial ornament tied up at the neck of the bride by the bridegroom at the time of the wedding ceremony and it marks that the couple had come under the

14 Ibid., p. 41.

15 Arno Lehmann, German Tamil Studies, in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Halle*, Jg. XVII Heft 6, 1968, p. 142.

16 Ibid. p. 141.

wedlock from thence. In the lifetime of a lady, this is considered very sacred and said to give a native Tamil lady some sort of social status and respect in the society with this ornament on her neck. Usually this gold ornament is tied up to an yellow thick thread smeared with the sacred turmeric paste and as long as the husband lives, the lady is allowed to wear this and once the husband dies, she had to remove this sacred ornament THÂÂLI, thereby she enters into the cruel widowhood, which will forbid her from enjoying the worldly pleasure and still worse, she shall not even come into prominent public life, as her very presence, in ceremonial occasions, is being considered as something inauspicious and unholy. This THÂÂLI or "Mangalasutra" will be worn by ladies in such a way that it is not usually very prominently displayed, for the THILÂK¹⁷ on the forehead and the metal rings on the feet fingers of the lady are additional marks of her marital status. It does require more knowledge and familiarity for one to understand and reconcile these traditional Tamil marital status. Karl Graul should have had immense knowledge in this aspect, for, he had not only mentioned about this sacred marriage ceremony, but also goes deeper still to reveal that there had been several kinds of the THÂÂLI, worn by ladies of different subjects/castes of the Tamil society. About the varieties of this ornament, Graul wrote thus:

"Das Tali - ein Ornament am Halse der Frau - vertritt die Stelle des Traurings. Es giebt viele Arten desselben, z.B. : pon = (von Gold), pottu = (cirkelförmig), nakku = (Zungenförmig), rama = (mit einer Ramafigur darauf), kuntu = oder mani = (mit einer kleinen Kugel daran), tatttu = (plattförmig), sangu = (eine Muschel, besonders in Tinnevely gebräuchlich), siru oder utkaluttu = (ein kleines Tali, am Halse befestigt, nicht auf die Brust herabhängend), irattei = (Doppel Tali), kajirru = (Schmuck Tali), mara = (von Holz), siluvai Tali (Kreuz Tali von Christen getragen)."¹⁸

Any foreigner or for that matter, any native Tamil scholar will be totally surprised to read this remark of Graul and will wonder to know as to how a German could have such intricate knowledge about such minute aspects of the local marriage customs. How Graul was able to notice these different kinds of THÂALI s being worn by the native Tamil ladies! It is said that Graul interacted with the natives without an interpreter and this further goes to prove that Graul must have profound knowledge of the local customs and manners, rituals and ceremonies, feasts and festivals, legends and fables etc.

5. Graul and the Chetti caste: Yet another example to prove that Graul 's involvement in the local tradition may here be allowed. There are so many castes among the native Tamil people, each sect following their own customs and manners. The business caste people, known as the "Vaaniger" or "Chetty" were one such caste in Tamil Nadu. Their main occupation was trading/business and among

17 A sacred circular ensign to adorn a lady's forehead. A symbol of Hindu femininity, practised from very ancient times. This is a sweet smelling paste, usually crimson in colour, made of turmeric and lime juice. Hindu widows do not adorn their foreheads with thilak.

18 K. Graul, Reise nach Ostindien, IV Theil, p. 336.

this main caste, there are a few sub-castes also. Regarding one such sub-caste, the "Naattukottai Chetty", even a very few native Tamil people might know of. Karl Graul should have very closely interacted with the native people, for, he recorded the minute aspects of this caste people thus:

"Die Wanicher, zu deutsch Kaufleute, mit ihren verschiedenen Abtheilungen, deren verschiedenen Benennungen oft nur auf Orts-Verschiedenheit beruhen, eröffnen insofern mit Recht die Reihe der Sudra-Kasten, als sie zu den wohlhabendsten und einflussreichsten gehören. Diejenigen die zu Ramnad, Sivaganga und Pudukottah ihren Sitz haben sich aber des Handels wegen häufig von ihren Familien trennen und an fremde Orte ziehen, stehen besonders im Rufe des Reichthums, und wer nicht 100, 000 Rupis im Beutel hat, gilt unter ihnen für unbemittelt. Aber auch unter den andern Abtheilungen der Wanicher giebt es Leute bei der Stadt, und so gross ist der Hochzeit-Aufwand und so bedeutend die Mitgabe der Frau in einer derselben, dass hier die Verheirathung eines Mädchens fast für den Ruin der Familie angesehen wird. Übrigens halten sich fast alle Abtheilungen von einander getrennt, und nur der Gösse 'Gold' vermag zuweilen, was sonst keiner so leicht gelingt. - eine Zwischenheirath zu Stande zu bringen."¹⁹

III. Conclusion

Like the two above-mentioned cases, there are pretty a lot of so many other evidences to prove that Karl Graul had involved himself deeply with the native society to find out for himself as to how many kinds of social customs, rituals and ceremonies had prevailed among various communities of people in Tamil Nadu a couple of centuries ago. These are some of the efforts taken by Graul to promote the Christian mission activities in Tamil Nadu. He was of the opinion that the Lutheran missionaries should acquaint themselves well with the local language, literature, customs etc. and only with such efforts, can a missionary attain his goal. But now, one wonders whether such kind of involvement on the parts of the Lutheran missionaries exists, when they labour not only in some Asian countries; but also in African and Oceanian countries. My humble submission is that if Lutheran missionaries would be trained with strong devotion and involvement like Karl Graul, to labour in various continents to propagate the Gospel, with particular emphasis on the local language and literature, customs and manners, feasts and festivals, rituals and ceremonies, then I believe that more number of people, the world over, can be brought under the Lutheran fold more easily.

19 Ibid., p. 168 f.